

# CHRIST

The pearl of great Price:

OR, THE

Excellency of CHRIST to Believers set forth.

*Being a Divine Message from God to poor Sinners; Or a dreadful Warning to all Impenitent Sinners.*

- I. *Wherein Jesus Christ and Salvation are freely offered to all that will come and accept of it, before the Day of Grace is past.*
- II. *Shewing the great danger of slighting Christ and Salvation tendered in the Gospel.*
- III. *With sweet Invitations to all poor sinners to close with Jesus Christ and be happy for ever.*

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By Mr. RICHARD BAXTER.

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Matth. xiii. 45, 46. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a Merchant-man seeking goodly Pearls, who when he had found one Pearl of great Price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.*

Heb. ii. 3. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great a Salvation? &c.*

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## A Divine Message; or, Christ the Pearl of great Price.

Matth. xxii. 2, 3, 4, 9. *The Kingdom of Heaven is like unto a certain King, which made a marriage for his Son, and sent forth his Servants to call them that were bidden to the Wedding, and they would not come. Again he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them that were bidden, behold I have prepared my Dinner, my Oxen and Fatlings are killed, and all Things are ready : Come unto the Marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his Farm, another to his merchandize.*

**T**HE blessed Son of God, that thought it not enough to die for the World, but would himself also be the Preacher of Grace and Salvation, doth comprize in this Parable the Sum of his Gospel. By the King that is here said to make the Marriage, is meant God the Father, that sent his Son into the World to cleanse them from their sins, and spouse them to himself. By his Son, for whom the Marriage was made, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who took to his God-head the Nature of Man, that he might be capable of being their Redeemer, when they had lost themselves in Sin. By the Marriage, is meant the conjunction of Christ, to the Soul of sinners, when he giveth up himself to them to be their Saviour, and they give up themselves to him as his redeemed ones, to be saved and redeemed by him, the Perfection of which Marriage will be at the Day

Day of Judgment, when the conjunction between the whole Church of Christ shall be solemnized : The World here in this Parable is invited by the Gospel to come in and partake of Christ and Salvation, which comprehendeth both Pardon, Justification and right to Salvation, and all other Privileges of the Members of Christ. The Invention is God's offer of Christ and Salvation in the Gospel, the Servants that invite them are the Preachers of the Gospel, who are sent forth for that End, the Preparation for the Feast there mentioned, is the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and opening a Way for revolting Sinners to return to God, the first persons invited are the *Jews* : Upon their obstinate refusal they are sentenced for Punishment, and the *Gentiles* are invited, not only invited, but by the powerful Preaching, and Miracles, and effectual Grace, intreated and prevailed with to come in, but they make light of it. From which Words we shall ground our whole Discourse, containing an Account of the ill Entertainment that the Gospel findeth with many to whom it is sent ; even after the first and second Invitation they make light of it ; and are taken up with other Things ; though the *Jews* were first guilty of it, yet too many of us *Gentiles* are like them at this Day.

The Sum of these Words we shall comprise in this Doctrine. For all the wonderful Love and Mercy that God hath manifested in giving his Son to be the Redeemer of the World, and which the Son hath manifested in redeeming them by his Blood ; for all his full preparation by being a sufficient Sacrifice for the Sins of all ; for all his personal Excellencies, and that full and glorious Salvation that he hath procured ; and for all his free Offers of these, and frequent an-  
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earnest invitations of Sinners ; yet many make light of all this, and prefer worldly enjoyments before it ; the ordinary Entertainment of all is by contempt. Not that all do so that were once guilty of it, for God hath chosen whom he will compel to come in, but till the Spirit of Grace overpowers the dead and obstinate Hearts of Men, they hear the Gospel as a common Story, and the great Matters contained in it, go not to the Heart.

1. I shall shew what it is that Men make light of. The Thing that carnal Hearers make light of is, *First*, The Doctrine of the Gospel itself, which they hear regardlessly. *Secondly*, The Benefits offered them therein are Christ himself. Concerning Christ himself, the Gospel declareth his Person and Nature, and the great Things he hath done and suffered for Man ; His redeeming him from the wrath of God by his Blood, and procuring a Grant of Salvation with himself. Furthermore, the same Gospel maketh an offer of Christ to sinners, that if they will accept of him on easie and reasonable Terms. he will be their Saviour, the Physician of their Souls, their Husband and Head.

2. The Benefits that he offereth them are these,

1. That with these blessed Relations to him, and interest in him, they shall have the Pardon of all their Sins past, and be saved from God's Wrath to come, so that they obey sincerely, and turn not again to the Rebellion of their unregeneracy.

2. They shall have the Spirit to become their Guide and Sanctifier, and to dwell in their Souls, and to help them against their Enemies ; and bring them back to God.

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3. They shall have right to everlasting Glory when this Life is ended, besides many more excellent Privileges, with the foretaste of what they shall enjoy hereafter. All these Benefits the Gospel offereth to them that will have Christ on reasonable terms: The sum of all is in 1 John v. 11. 12. *This is the Record, that God has given eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath Life, and he that hath not the Son hath not Life.* In the next place, I shall shew what this making light of the Gospel is.

1. It is not taking heed to what is spoken, as though it was no Matter of Truth, or a thing that little concerned them. When the Gospel doth not affect them, or go to their Hearts, yet Men are not awakened by it from their Security; when we tell Men what Christ hath done and suffered for their Souls, and it scarce moveth them, our words take up in the Porch of their Ears and fancies, but will not enter their inward parts, as if we were speaking to them that had no Hearts or Feeling. This is making light of Christ, *Acts xxviii, Hearing ye shall hear and not understand, seeing ye shall see, and not perceive; for the Hearts of this People are waxen gross, and their Ears are dull of hearing; their Eyes are closed up.*

2. The main Cause of Mens slighting of Christ and Salvation, is a secret Root of Unbelief in Mens Hearts; whatsoever they pretend, they do not soundly and thoroughly believe the Word of God; they are taught to say the Gospel is true, but they never saw the Evidence of its truth, so far as thoroughly to perswade them of it; nor have they got their Souls settled on the infallibility of God's Testimony, nor considered the Truth of the Particular Doctrines revealed in the Scripture,

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so far as soundly to believe them. Oh ! did you all soundly believe the Words of this Gospel, of the evil of Sin, of the need of Christ, and what he hath done for you, and what ye must be and do, if ever you will be saved by him, and what will become of you if you do not ; I dare say it would cure the contempt of Christ, and you would not make so light of the Matter of your Salvation. But Men do not believe, while they say they do, and would face us down that they do, and verily think they do themselves. *There is a Root of bitterness, and an evil heart of Unbelief, that makes them depart from the living God.* Heb. xii. The heart is hard naturally by custom of sinning, made more hard by long abuse of Mercy, neglect of the means of Grace, resisting of the Spirit of God. Hence it is that Men are turned into Stones, and till God cure them of the Stone of the Heart, no wonder they feel not what they know, or regard what is preached to them, but make light of all. When Mens Hearts are like the High-way, that is trodden to hardness by long custom of sinning, or like the Clay that is hardened into Stone by the heat of these Mercies that should have melted them into Repentance ; *when their Consciences are seared with a hot Iron*, as the Apostle speaks in 2 *Tim. v. 3.* no wonder then they be past feeling, and work all uncleanness with greediness, do make light of Christ and everlasting Glory, Oh ! that it were not the case of too many hearers of the Gospel at this Day. Oh ! had we living Souls to speak to, they would hear and feel, and not make light of what we say, I know that they are naturally alive, but spiritually dead, as the scripture witnesseth in *Eph. ii. 3.* Oh ! if there were but one spark of the Grace of Life in them, the doctrine of Salvation, by Jesus Christ, would appear to them the weightiest

business in the World. In a word, Men of a worldly disposition do judge of all Things according to worldly Advantages, therefore Christ is slighted. *Isa. liii. 3.* He is despised and rejected of Men, they hide their Faces from him and esteemed him not, as seeing no Beauty or Comeliness in him, that they should desire him,

3. Christ and Salvation are made light of, because Men are never sensible of their sin and misery, and extream necessity of Christ and Salvation: Their Eyes were never open to see themselves as they are, nor their Hearts soundly humbled in the sense of their Condition: If this were done, they would soon be brought to value a Saviour: A truly broken Heart can no more make light of Christ and Salvation, than a hungry Man of his Food, or a sick Man of the Means that would give him Ease; till then our Words cannot have access to our Hearts: While sin and misery is made light of, Christ and Salvation will be made light of; but when these are perceived an intollerable Burden, then nothing will serve the Turn but Christ; till Men be truly humbled, they can venture Christ and Salvation for a Lust, for a little worldly Gain, even for less than nothing. But when God hath illuminated them, and broken their Hearts, then they would give a world for Christ; then they must have Christ else they die. *All things then are dross and dung in comparison of the excellent knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii.* When oncethey are awakened by God's Judgments; as the poor Jaylor *Acts xvi. 29.* *Then they cry out, what shall we do to be saved?* This is the reason why God will bring Men so low by Humility, to bring them to Salvation. Humble thyself under the mighty Hand of God, and he will exalt thee in his due Time.



4. Christ and Salvation are made light of, upon Pretumption that he is theirs already, and that God is so merciful, and Christ that suffered so much for them is surely resolved to save them; or else it may be obtained at any Time, if it be not yet so, It is true, Grace is free, and the offer universal, according to the extent of the preaching of the Gospel; but he that hath promised thee Christ, if thou be willing on his Terms, hath promised to make thee willing; if thou art not willing now, how dost thou think to be willing hereafter; if thou canst make thine Heart willing, why is it not done now? Can you do it better when sin hath more hardned it, and God may have given thee over to thyself, if it be so easie a Matter indeed as you imagine, for a Sinner to believe and repent at any time, how comes it to pass that it is done by so few? But most of the World do perish in their impenitency when they have all the helps and means that we can afford them. It is the easiest thing and sweetest Life in the World, to a gracious Soul to live in the love of God, and the delightful thoughts of the Life to come where all their hope and happiness lyeth; But to the worldly carnal Heart, it is as easie to remove a Mountain as to bring them to this; however these Men are their own condemners, for if they think it so easie a Matter to repent and believe, and so to have Christ and a Right to Salvation; then have they no excuse for neglecting this, that they thought so easie.

O wretched and impenitent Souls! what mean you to say, when God shall ask you, why you did not repent and believe, and love your Redeemer above the World, when you thought it so easie that you could do it at any time?

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We shall now come to the Application, *Use the first*. Hence we may be informed of the Blindness and folly of all carnal Men; how contemptible are their Judgments, that think Christ and Salvation of little worth? What reason is here that any should be discouraged by them, or their scorns, or contradictions? It is one of the wonders of the World, *That when God so loved the world as to send his Son*, and Christ hath made a sure satisfaction by his Death, sufficient for them all, and offered the Benefits of it so freely to them, even without Money or price: that yet most of the World should perish, yea the most of those that are thus called by his word. Why, here is the reason, when Christ hath done all this, Men make light of it; God hath shewen them that he is not unwilling, and Christ hath shewen he is not unwilling, that Men should be restored to God's Favour, and be saved; but Men are actually unwilling themselves: *God taketh no pleasure in the Death of Sinners; but rather that they turn and live*, Ezek. xxxiii. 11. But Men take a pleasure in sin, that they will die before they return. It is a most lamentable thing to see how most Men do spend their care and time, and their pains for known vanities, while God and glory are laid aside. That he that is all, should seem to them as nothing, and that which is nothing, should seem to them as good as all, that God should set mankind in such a race, when Heaven or Hell is their certain end, and that they should sit down and loyter, and run after the childish toys of the World, and so much forget the prize that they should run for. Oh poor distracted world! what is it you run after and neglect? If God had never told what you are sent into the world to do, or whether you are going, or what was before you in another world; then ye had been

excuseable ; but he hath told you, till ye are weary of hearing it and yet ye make light of it.

Again, That which we most highly value, we cannot buy too dear : Christ and Salvation are freely given, yet most Men go without them, because they cannot enjoy the world and them together : They are caused out to part with that which would hinder them from Christ, and they will not do it. They are called to give God his own, and to resign all to his Will, and let go the profits and pleasures of this world, when they must let go either Christ or them, and they will not ; they think this too dear a bargain, they say they must look to their Estates and Credit, and pleasures and profits, while Christ and Salvation are neglected. Christ has told us over and over again, that if we will not forsake all for him, we cannot be his Disciples, *Math. x.* How will these despisers of Christ and Salvation be able one day to look him in the Face, and give account of these neglects ? *How will you escape, if you neglect so great a Salvation ?* Thus much I have spoken by way of Conviction. Do not some of your Consciences by this Time smite you, and say, *I am the Man that have made light of my Salvation* ; if you do not, it is because you make light of it still, for all that is said to you, I would fain have this damning sin cured. Consider I beseech you first, you make light of him that did not make light of thee, who did deserve it ; as a Man, thou art but a worm of God, as a sinner thou art far viler than a Toad, yet Christ was so far from making light of thee and thy happiness that he came down into the Flesh, and lived a Life of suffering, and offered himself a Sacrifice to Justice that thou hast provoked, that thy miserable Soul might have a remedy, and yet shall we slight him for all his Love to us.

2. Consider the Work of Man's Salvation by Jesus Christ is the Master-piece of all the Works of God, wherein he would have his Love and mercy to be magnified ; how great was the evil and misery that he delivered us from, and the good procured for us ? All are wonders from his Birth to his Ascension, from our new Birth to our Glorification, all are wonders of matchless Mercy ; and yet do you make light of them ? You make light of matters of the greatest excellency and concernment in the world, you know not what it is you slight ; had you well known, you would not have done it, as Christ said to the Woman of *Samaria*, *John* iv. 1. *Cor.* ii. 8. So had you truly known what Christ hath done and suffered for you, you would not have made light of him ; had you been one Day in Heaven and but seen what they possess, and seen also what miserable Souls must endure that are shut out, you would never sure make so light of Christ again. Oh sir, it is no Trifle or jesting Matter that the Gospel speaks of. Oh Lord, that Men did but know what everlasting Glory and everlasting Torments are ! would they then hear as they do ? I wonder that such Thoughts do not break your sleep, and that they come not in your Minds when you are about your Labour ; how can you have any quietness in your Minds, or how can you eat, or drink, or rest, till you have got some Ground of everlasting Consolation ? Is that a Man or a Corpse, that is not concerned with Matters of so great Moment ? That can be readier to Sleep than to tremble, when he hears how he must stand at the Bar of God.

3. Who is it that sends this weighty Message to you, is it not God himself ? Shall the God of Heaven speak, and Men make light of it ? You would  
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not slight the voice of an Angel nor Prince. Consider whose Salvation you make light of, it is not your own. Are you no more near or dear to your selves, than to make light of your own Happiness or Misery? Why, sirs, do you not care whether you be saved or damned? Is self Love lost? are you turned your own Enemies? *Prov. i. 26. All them that hate ME love Death.*

4. Consider the Time is near when Christ and Salvation will not be made light of as now they are when God hath shaken these careless Souls out of your Bodies, and you must answer for all your sins in your own Name; O then, what would you give for a Saviour, when a thousand Bills shall be brought against you, and none to relieve you? Then you would consider, that Christ would now have stood between me and the wrath of God; had I not despised him, he would have answered all. When you see the World hath left you, and your Companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry Days are gone, then what would you give for that Christ and Salvation that you account not worth your labour? Do you think when you see the Judgment Seat, and you are doomed to everlasting Perdition for your wickedness, that you should make as light of Christ as now? Will he then be worth ten thousand Worlds, and is he not worth the highest Estimation and dearest Affection? So much for the Hainousness of this Sin of making light of Christ. I now come to know your Resolution for the Time to come; do you mean to set as light by Christ and Salvation as hitherto; and to be the same Man after all this? I hope not. Oh, let not your Ministers, that would fain help to save you, be brought in as Witnesses against you! Should the Lord ask them at the Day of Judgment, did you



you never tell these Men what Christ did for their Souls, and what need they had of him ? we must needs speak the Truth, Yea, Lord we told them as plainly as we could, but they gave us no hearing, and made light of all that we said to them. Oh ! how sad will it prove on your side, if you force them to such an Answer as this.

Will you for the Time to come repent and believe, and make Conscience of Duty, and earnestly pray to God, that you may have a part in Christ and Salvation : Go not out of Doors till you have breathed out these Desires to God ; do not ly down to rest till you have breathed out these desires, say not God knows my necessities without so often praying : For tho' he do, yet will he have you know tham and feel them, and exercise your Desires and all the Graces of his holy Spirit in these Duties. It is he that hath commanded us to pray continually ; tho' he knoweth your needs without it. 1 *Thes.* v. 17. Christ himself spent whole Nights in prayer, and encourageth us to this Course, *Luke* xviii. 1.

2dly, will you for the Time to come resolutely cast away your known sins at the command of Christ. If ye have been proud, or contentious, or malicious, or revengeful, be so no more : If you have been Adulterers, Swearers, or Cursers, be so no more : You cannot hold these and let by Christ and Salvation. What say you, are you resolved to let them go or not ? If not, when you know it is the will of Christ, and he hath told you, such shall not enter into his Kingdom, do not you make light of him.

3dly, Will you for the Time to come serve God in the dearest, as well as the cheapest part of his Service, not only with your Tongues but with your Purse and your Deeds ? Shall the poor find you set more by Christ than the World, Pure Religion  
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and undefiled before God is this, to visit the fatherless and the Widows in their afflictions, *James* 1. Chap. last ver. will you resolve to stick to Christ, and make sure this Work of Salvation, tho' it cost you all you have in this World ; If you think these Terms too dear, you make light of Christ and will be judged accordingly.

*4thly*, will you for the future make much of all things that tend to your Salvation, and take every help that God offers to you, and gladly make use of all his Ordinances, attend upon the strengthening Sacraments, spend the Lord's Day in these holy employments, instruct your Children and Servants in these things. *Deut.* vi. 6, 7. get into good Company that set their Faces heaven-wards, and that will teach you the Way, and help you thither ; and take heed of the Company of wicked Scorners, or foolish voluptuous fleshly Men, or any that would hinder you in this Work. Will you do these things, or will you shew that you are slights of Christ by neglect of these ; will you take it for your highest honour that you may be Christ's Disciples, and may be admitted to serve and worship him, and rejoice with holy confidence in the sufficiency of that Sacrifice by which you may have pardon of all your failings, and right to the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. If you do each thing sincerely, you will shew that you set by Christ and Salvation, or else not. *Lastly*, Sirs, I have now done the work which I have been upon ; what effect it hath or will have upon your Hearts, I know not, nor is it in my power to accomplish that which my Soul desireth for you ; were it the Lord's will that I might have my wish herein, these words which you have heard read unto you, should so strike you that the secured should be awakened by them and that none might perish by the  
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of their Salvation. O that I could make every Man's Conscience a Preacher to himself, that it might do it, which is ever with you that the next Time that thou goest prayerless to Bed or about business, Conscience may cry out, Dost thou not set no more by Christ and thy Salvation? The next time thou art ready to rush upon known sins, and to please your fleshly desire against the command of God, Conscience might cry out, is Christ and Salvation of no more worth than to cast them away, or to venture them for thy Lusts? that when you, are next spending the Lord's Day in Idleness or vain sports, Conscience might tell you what you are doing. In a word, that in all your neglects of Duty, your sticking at the supposed Labour, or Cost of holy Life, yea in all your Cold and lazy Prayers and performancer, Conscience might tell you, how unsuitable such Endeavours are to the Reward; and that Christ and Salvation should not be slighted. It is a thousand pities that when God hath provided a Saviour for the World, and when Christ hath suffered so much for their Sins, and made so full a Satisfaction to divine Justice, and purchased so glorious a Kingdom for his Saints, and all this is offered so freely to Sinners, even for nothing, that yet so many Millions should everlastingly perish, because they make light of their Saviour and Salvation, and prefer the vain World and their Lusts before them. Thus I have delivered my Message, the Lord open your hearts to receive it: I have perswaded you with the Words of truth and soberness, the Lord perswade you more effectually, or else all is lost. Let us hear the Conclusion of the whole Matter, *Fear God and keep his Commandments, for this is the whole duty of Man.*